

# Report to the Community



## Program Activity

January 1 – February 28, 2006

### At a Glance

#### **BMCW activity January 1 through February 28, 2006, as of February 28, 2006:**

- 5,510** Calls received by Intake 220-SAFE (YTD)
  - 93** Family cases transferred to Ongoing Case Management (YTD)
  - 122** Family cases transferred to in-home Safety Services (YTD)
  - 42** Families referred to Family Intervention Support and Services (FISS) (YTD)
- 2,931** Children in an Out-of-Home Care placement
  - 323** (11%) Children placed in a relative licensed foster home
  - 785** (27%) Children on a court order who are placed with relatives receiving a Kinship Care payment
  - 934** (32%) Children placed in a non-relative licensed foster home
  - 31** (1%) Children placed in a pre-adoptive home (licensed foster home)
- 3,659** Children with relatives not involved with BMCW receiving Kinship Care payment
  - 601** Children remain at home under the court's jurisdiction on a court order of supervision
  - 895** Actively licensed foster homes

#### Permanency achieved through:

- 90** children reunified (YTD)
- 37** children adopted (YTD)
- 15** children through transfer of guardianship (YTD)
- 121** children in Subsidized Guardianship program

## Update on Permanency Outcomes

Between January 1 and February 28, 2006, 142 children achieved permanency:

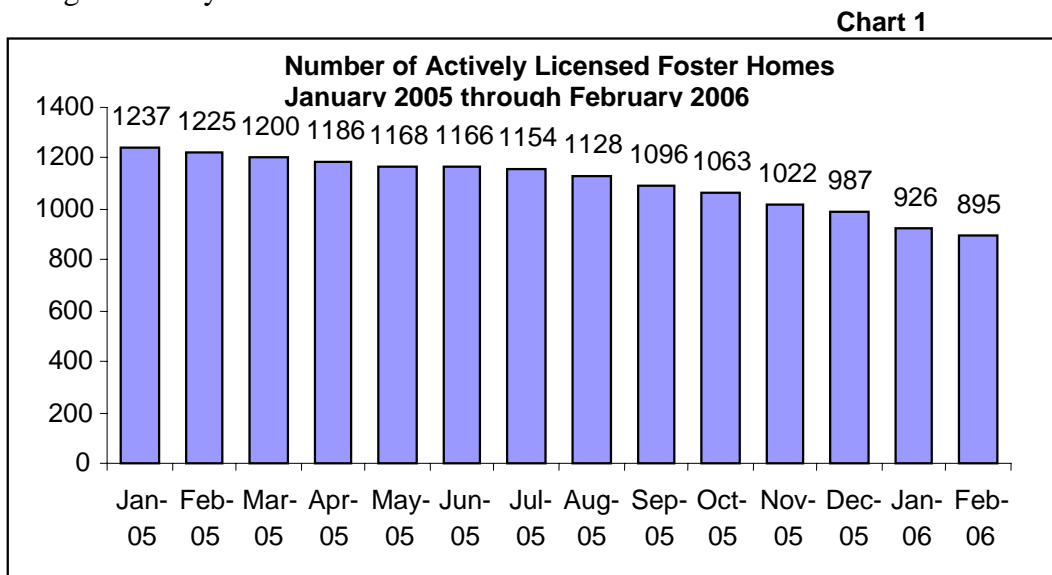
- 90** Children achieved permanency through reunification (YTD).
- 37** Children achieved permanency through adoption (YTD).
- 15** Children achieved permanency through transfer of guardianship (YTD).
- 121** Children achieved permanency through the Subsidized Guardianship program.

## Current Status of Foster Homes

As of February 28, 2006, there were:

- 895 actively licensed foster homes.
- 13 newly licensed foster homes.
- 210 actively licensed foster homes on hold.
- 685 foster homes available for placement of children.

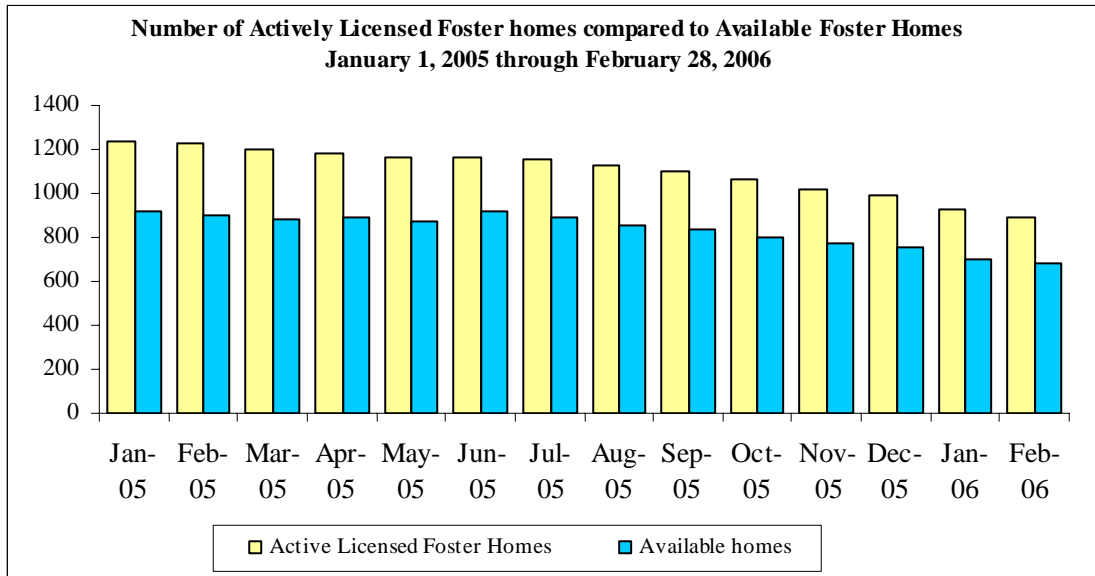
Chart 1 provides information on the number of actively licensed foster homes January 2005 through February 2006.



As the data suggest, there has been a consistent and steady decline in the number of actively licensed foster homes. Overall, there has been a 25.4% decline in the number of foster homes since March 2005.

In addition, as of February 28, 2006, there are 210 actively licensed foster homes on hold. When a foster home is placed on hold, the license is considered active; however, no additional children are placed in the home. Chart 2 provides information about the number of available actively licensed foster homes on a monthly basis January 2005 through February 28, 2006.

**Chart 2**



As the chart indicates, the number of foster homes available for a child placement is greatly reduced compared to the total number of actively licensed foster homes.

Combined with the overall decline in foster homes, the number of homes on hold has had significant impact on the number of homes available for placement of children. At the end of February, 685 foster homes (76.5 % of 895 actively licensed homes) were available for placement of children. During the last 14 months, at least 22% to 27% of the foster homes were not available for placements during the month.

There are multiple reasons why licensed foster homes are closed or placed on hold, many are based on the request of the foster parent First Choice for Children reports the following reasons for foster home closure or placing a home on hold.

### **Closures**

Approximately 71% of the foster parents requested closure because:

- 2.8% have moved.
- 31% had household composition or family situation change.
- 28.1% have adopted their foster child.
- 24.5% are tired/need a break.
- 1.2% had their license expire and did not want to renew.

Of the remaining closures:

- 4.6 % had re-licensure denied.
- 6.9% had the license revoked.
- 4.9% were administrative.

### **Home on Hold**

Approximately:

- 25% were due to a pending child abuse or neglect investigation.
- 21% were at the request of the foster parent.
- 3% because the foster parent is in the process of adopting the foster child.
- 12% are on administrative hold.
- 40% were waiting to complete training.

## **Efforts by BMCW and First Choice for Children and to Address the Need for Foster Homes**

As of February 28, 2006, First Choice for Children (FCFC) reported the following:

- 117 new applications have been received.
- 120 homes are pending completion of training.
- 139 homes are being studied.
- 13 homes were licensed.

### **Recruitment**

The Recruitment Advisory Council continues to collaborate with community organizations and public and private agencies.

Targeted recruitment initiatives include:

- Radio public service announcements focusing on the needs of adolescents in care broadcast on WMCW AM1290.
- A direct mail campaign to 23,000 homes in northern Milwaukee County launched in February 2006.
- Dividing MPS schools between FCFC and Children's Service Society of Wisconsin staff to reach each and every school. Cooperation with MPS Public Affairs and Marketing to publish foster/adoption fact cards and bookmarks that were distributed to all schools in the district to mark *MPS Year of Foster and Adoptive Families* as declared by the Board of School Directors.
- Developed a joint brochure (foster care/adoption) and the translation of this brochure into Spanish.
- Partnering with counties in the southeast region, including Kenosha, Racine, Waukesha, Walworth, Jefferson, Ozaukee, and Washington to enter into joint foster parent recruitment activities to include two large 12-week radio campaigns with WKLH and WJMR beginning in April with a focus on targeted recruitment for teens and other resource needs that are identified within the partnership.
- Working with Time Warner Cable to produce television ads that will reach over 186,000 homes to air starting April 2006.
- Continued outreach and collaboration via neighborhood centers and churches.
- Utilizing foster parent ambassadors to attend recruitment events and present at community settings to identify new Assessment Foster Home providers.

FCFC's relationship with MPS continues to be the focus for recruitment initiatives directed at individuals capable of caring for high-need adolescents. The primary focus is MPS staff with the skills and experience necessary to meet their needs. FCFC is also focusing on parents who are involved with Parent Teacher Organizations and individual school events, as they are identified as strong supporters of their children and schools.

Sixty-nine licensed beds are currently available in Assessment Foster Homes. FCFC has begun closely screening applicants in one-bedroom homes who may be appropriate to take short-term placement of children under one year of age as an Assessment Home provider. Information will also be distributed during orientation to those individuals living in a one-bedroom home and options for licensure. FCFC anticipates these efforts will provide additional resources for infants, freeing up other Assessment Foster Home beds for children over one year of age.

FCFC has completed the development of a staff position providing direct outreach to unlicensed relative caregivers to expedite education about licensing and screening of prospective applicants. The benefits and responsibilities of licensure, as well as a thorough picture of the home study process, will be provided to unlicensed caregivers. The position focuses heavily on consultation with Ongoing Case Management staff as well as adoption consultants for the purpose of early identification of licensing obstacles and follow-through on mitigation of these obstacles when appropriate.

### **Retention**

FCFC held internal focus groups with licensing and placement staff to brainstorm foster parent mentoring and support group activities, and steps for development of these resources. The licensing and placement staff had many ideas to engage foster parents in this process so the next step is to meet directly with foster parents about what their needs may be, how they would find the groups most helpful, and incentives for attending. Regarding foster parent mentoring activities, FCFC will utilize current Foster Parent Ambassadors to develop this program.

FCFC has begun working with the other BMCW partners and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to develop a more comprehensive foster parent surveying process to receive ongoing feedback about the training and support needs of foster parents. It is anticipated these surveys will be ready for use in the fall of 2006.

Training for families taking teens and high needs children of all ages continues to occur. February training included the following training specifically for caregivers of teens:

- *Independent Living Skills for Teens* was offered once with 12 caregivers in attendance.
- *Managing the Hard to Manage Teen* was offered twice with 33 caregivers in attendance.
- *Preparing Foster Youth for Higher Education* was offered once with 11 caregivers in attendance.
- Although not specifically for teens, nonetheless relative to their needs, *Substance Abuse and Foster Youth* was held once with six caregivers in attendance.
- *Children Who Steal* was held twice with a total of 12 caregivers in attendance.
- *Making Memories* was held once with six caregivers in attendance.
- Along with regularly held PACE Trainings for applicants, there were a total of 14 specialized trainings for existing foster parents, with a total of 124 caregivers in attendance. Four Spanish PACE trainings were offered with a total of nine caregivers in attendance.